

Minutes of the OB Conference

The Joint OB Conference convened on 10 April 1968, under the chairmanship of Paul V. Walsh, OER.

Opening remarks were made by Mr. Richard Helms, and R. Jack Smith on the background of the conference and its importance to the White House and the Washington intelligence community. Mr. Helms stressed the importance of all views being heard and thoroughly discussed.

Mr. Smith outlined the general dissatisfaction of CIA with the existing OB.

1. Some force levels were understated, even when there was agreement on definitions, e.g., main and local forces.

2. Certain force structures were excluded from the OB which resulted in an underestimation of enemy strength and capabilities.

3. Major problems resulted from the way in which enemy forces were attrited.

Mr. Smith indicated that he expected the CIA draft estimates to be ~~continued, and~~ modified as a result of the conference. At the conclusion of the conference, ~~however,~~ he would submit recommendations to the Director, that included the revised CIA estimates of the Communist forces in South Vietnam, including the size and composition of the insurgency base.

He hoped that the conference could reach an agreed position. If not, it was his intention to go ahead anyway and ask for explicit statements from the dissenting groups that fully explain their positions.

Administration

Mr. Walsh presented the Agenda (see Tab A) and gave the general ground rules for the conference. He appointed a Steering Committee consisting of Col. Do Graham, MACV; [] DIA; and himself.

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The conference was to proceed as follows. CIA would present its estimate of enemy OB for each of the individual category of enemy military or political strength. After each presentation there would be a general discussion. The Steering Committee would then decide if it appeared fruitful to have a working group appointed to explore the subject further and hopefully come to some agreed position on force numbers, definitions, and any other relevant problems.

The General CIA Position

Mr. Walsh then gave a general briefing on CIA's position, the difficulties that the intelligence community had gotten into because of the 14.3 estimate, our problems with MACV strict confirmation criteria, ^{and} difficulties that result because of lags in information so that enemy strengths are underestimated.

He also stressed the concept of insurgency base, and that persons in this base both sustain and inflict casualties. At the same time he stressed the importance of not defining the base as the entire population under enemy control.

After the break there was a general discussion of various aspects of OB reporting, attriting, and what should and should not be included in the OB.

General Brown opened the discussion by observing that it was reasonable to include certain elements in the OB that had been excluded. "We have gone by and the point by which we can ignore them."

Col. Graham opening remarks, "You boggle at our numbers; I boggle at yours". He then defended MACV's current estimates of Communist military strength and questioned whether in fact the Washington community should in fact be distressed by them. He suggested the enemy was at the bottom of the barrel for the Tet offensive, using soldiers with unhealed wounds, etc. The enemy's second and third waves were pitiful.

The remainder of the morning session was devoted to what should be included in the OB and how the various sub-categories should be labelled. MACV representatives recognized that many Communist organizations play an important war-supporting role but the number can not be quantified. An endless number of groups could be included, and they were opposed to assigning numbers to these groups.

The CIA position recognized that there was a qualitative factor involved. But CIA was opposed to making the insurgency base open-ended. CIA was talking of ^{units} ~~limits~~ organized and which played a direct role in the war. CIA was not talking about tax collectors.

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T [] presented the CIA briefing on enemy main and local forces. See Tab . Following the briefing Mr. Walsh asked for comments from conference principals.

General Brown emphasized the need for a separate Comint report and that the OB reflect all-source data.

AT Col. Graham expressed some general reactions to the CIA report. It was true that the OB might exclude some enemy units. But for every case that could be made for adding an enemy unit a case could also be made for deleting an enemy unit. The MACV criteria makes it hard to drop a unit. [] many units in the OB should be dropped yet they are still in the OB. Some of the differences between CIA and DIA estimates did show that there were reporting problems.

Col. Graham expressed concern about basing OB estimates on extrapolation, especially expolation based on units that were not typical of how the enemy fought. For example, the enemy never fought as a division. He admitted that there were units MACV knew nothing about. If the OB is expanding, more units coming into being, than MACV does have a problem. If the OB is contracting there isn't a problem. If CIA no longer felt that the enemy strength was declining overall than we did have a major problem. A change in 14.3 is implied.

There was then a preliminary discussion of how infiltration was handled in the OB which was discussed in more detail later in the conference.

Representatives from MACV next discussed differences in the structures of various enemy divisions, the criteria for dropping enemy forces, and what strength of enemy units was used in the OB. MACV representatives maintained that the strength of enemy units was carried at realistic levels, based as far as possible on firm intelligence. When this was lacking the assigned strength was assumed; there was no docking. The 273rd was an exception, the unit had gotten back into shape very rapidly.

MACV claimed that when documents do become available they show that the on hand duty strength of the unit is generally, although not always, less than the figure carried in the OB.

Explaining further the details of attriting specific units the MACV representatives gave several examples. If an enemy unit had been in combat and suffered heavy casualties they would be charged to specific units -- e.g., the strength would decline from 1,000 to 600. If, however, there was no firm evidence of the strength of an enemy unit the total assigned strength of the unit would be used.

The main MACV argument against the CIA position that ~~not~~ substantial numbers of city units exist~~s~~ that are not in the OB was that if these units existed they would have been picked-up. Col. Graham indicated that MACV was unwilling to estimate the force level of city units on the basis of an extrapolation.

The discussion frequently returned to the question of the different between OB accounting procedures and the making of an realistic estimate of enemy strength.

The MACV argument in rejecting the CIA view that there were unlisted support personnel integral to the divisions was as follows. Divisions seldom control anything; the organizations of divisions, especially their rear echelon, vary greatly; if acting independently the divisions don't need the additional support; independent units are in the OB that may in fact be the support units to divisions; Much of the MACV argument rested on circumstantial evidence that if separate support units to the NVA 5th and VC 9th divisions had been around for a long time and there is no evidence that they exist, then they probably do not exist.

Col. Graham returned again to an earlier theme. The MACV OB was an orderly, systematic, approach. There were reasons for decreasing the strength of the enemy as well as increasing it. He maintained that he had never known of an OB that was not inflated, and the present MACV OB was inflated too.

ATT DIA, ^{expressed} ~~too~~ strong objection to Col. Graham's statement. He admitted that all OB's contained dead wood, but by the very nature of the problem, many more units were left out completely.

Mr. Walsh emphasized that the CIA study had made an honest effort to be conservative. He hoped that a working group could resolve some of the problems between the CIA and MACV estimates of enemy main and local strength. The question of newly identified units, small units omitted, and city and unusual units was assigned to the working group.

The question of how to treat the TDY problem was given the committee. MACV claimed that the examples cited in the CIA draft report did not, in fact, accurately reflect MACV OB accounting procedures.

Wednesday Afternoon session
10 April 1968

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The meeting was convened by Mr. Paul Walsh at 0900.

Mr. George Allen, SAVA, presented his briefing on Communist self-defense forces in South Vietnam. (See Tab) Following Mr. Allen's presentation Mr. Walsh asked for a general comment of the subject by the principals at the conference.

General Brown complimented Mr. Allen for his excellent presentation and made the following comments:

1) he could see no problem in quantifying this particular force structure of the enemy. There was a question as to whether we should include the self-defense units as part of the enemy's military forces.

2) it is very probable that the self-defense forces will become relatively more important in the upcoming stages of the war.

3) he was favorably impressed with Mr. Allen's methodology, that made use of the HES system for quantifying the self-defense forces.

~~Man next to George Allen:~~

Lt. Col. W. Dunn, C. INCPAC

- commented that he was critical of accepting enemy propaganda as fact; that enemy goals for creating self-defense units should not be confused with their achievements. Furthermore, it should be recognized that the "home guard" forces shift loyalties quickly, and that these "forces" were not a significant threat. If an "estimate" was such forces were needed it should be that portion of the organizable population under VC control.

Col. Graham emphasized that it should be made clear that MACV recognizes the self-defense forces as existing. It was his opinion, however, that 14.3 states the case as well as it can be done. He was opposed to quantifying this force, and believed that harm would be done if people did insist on putting a number on it because it is not part of the military threat and serves no meaningful military purpose.

Col. Graham was critical of Mr. Allen's presentation because he believed that many of Mr. Allen's quotes of Grap's military philosophy on militia and self-defense forces was actually describing guerrilla, not self-defense.

Mr. Allen's rebuttal emphasized that the self-defense forces were an important military link between the hamlet and political infrastructure. Furthermore, "self-defense" could not be defined as all other inhabitants under VC control that lend some support to the war effort, CIA would resist any attempt to introduce an open-ended category that would, in effect, approach in size, the total manpower resources of the enemy. Mr. Allen also made it clear that the CIA estimates self-defense units are not dependent upon the plan goals of the Communists. The under-achievement of goals was clearly recognized in the various models he had presented and the conservative final estimate that was presented. Finally, he contended that it could not be shown that Grap strategy on the use of militia forces had in fact been discredited or discarded by the Communists.

Mr. Walsh summarized the discussion. First, DIA and CIA were agreed that the self-defense forces were a legitimate military force and should be quantified. 100,000 seemed a reasonable number. We were all agreed that qualitatively the self-defense forces were second, third rate, but these quality problems would easily be covered in a textured discussion of these forces. He stated that we can no longer avoid facing up to this problem, it is part of the manpower base and manpower drain.

Col. Graham again pleaded the case for 14.3, his views were unchanged. The military threat is distorted if you add the young, the very old, the un-armed.

ATT stated that the question was whether it was more misleading to quote a figure that includes or excludes the self-defense forces. Leaving them out distorts the figure.

Mr. Walsh concluded the discussion that DIA and CIA would go with an agreed number and definition of its self-defense forces. Hopefully MACV would go along with this number; if not MACV would be expected to indicate why it could not go along with the DIA-CIA figure.

Morning Session
12 April 1968

Mr. Sam Adams, OER, gave the CIA position on the size of the Communist political infrastructure in South Vietnam.

The general reaction of the MACV delegation was that Mr. Adams had not presented any information that was basically different from what he had presented in Saigon in September 1967.

Lt. Robinson stated that MACV had revised its methodology since September for estimating the Political OB of the Communists and had, in fact, come part way in meeting some of Mr. Adams objections. He denied that the estimate of enemy infrastructure at the district level and above was obtained solely by using name lists compiled by MACV in Saigon. Organizational charts were used and organizations and units were included at times even though there was no specific information on their existence.

Both Mr. Adams and Lt. Kelly agreed that the enemy's political structure on OB had to be looked at as a spectrum extending from the top leadership to thousands of party followers at the village level. The heart of the disagreement between CIA and MACV was not where the line should be drawn at any point along the spectrum but what should be included within the spectrum. Much of the difference in viewpoints was typified by discussions as whether typists in a security cell should or should not be included in the political OB. The CIA position was that such persons were full time employees, playing a significant role in the Communist infrastructure. The MACV position was that not every clerk or guard should be counted. The cadre for an armed reconnaissance unit would be included but the total personnel would not be included.

MACV maintained that its data base was sufficiently complete that ease had to be looked at on an individual basis to decide what should be counted.

ATT There was an attempt by [] to have the principals come to an agreed position by extending the range of the estimate and broadening the definition of the political infrastructure. This proved unsuccessful.

Col. Graham concluded that MACV's estimate of 80,000 to 90,000 looks better now than when it was arrived at and he had seen no evidence that would make him change his mind.

General Brown observed that we still had the problem typified by the full-time typist. If he doesn't belong in the infrastructure where do we put him?

Mr. Walsh concluded the discussion of political infrastructure by suggesting that we put aside the subject until we return to the subject of how CIA would present its estimates of enemy strength.

Mr. Sam Adams, OER, gave the CIA briefing on Assault Youth.

See Tab .

At the conclusion of the briefing on Assault Youth Mr. Walsh asked if the conference could agree that assault youth should be in the insurgency base and that an estimate of 10-20,000 was a reasonable estimate. He then asked for general comments.

General Brown, DIA, started the discussion by stating that he believed assault youth did exist and that they should be included in the insurgency base. He did question, however, how these forces could be separated from other enemy categories such as the self-defense units.

Col. Graham stated that he wanted to be very explicit on several points. There was no question about the existence of assault youths and they were part of an insurgency base; they did take casualties. There were problems, however, about how these forces should be described -- their role and functions -- and even more serious problems when it came to devising a method for counting them.

Col. Graham described the Assault Youth as an organized labor pool; some were guerrilla as well; above the district level some assault youths were already in OB so that there was a danger of ~~double~~ ^{double} durable counting. In addition, he was opposed to counting someone who was not a military threat.

AT CIA, emphasized that the Assault Youth units were graded. The top graded units left home; others did not. The CIA of 10,000-20,000 was a reasonable, and conservative estimate of full-time personnel, at

the district level or above. The estimate did not include these low district levels, where double-counting would be a problem. He emphasized that these troops played an important military role, they gave direct support to armed troops in combat situations or were actively engaged in direct military actions themselves.

Col. Graham objected what he claimed was the CIA tendency to select out categories from the total insurgency base, put numbers on these categories, which then became, at least to many, a real enemy military threat.

ATT countered that intelligence had a responsibility for better defining the total insurgency pyramid of the enemy. It was not appropriate to go all the way to the base -- to include the total manpower resources of the enemy --. However, neither was it correct to restrict the military threat to the very apex of the pyramid.

General Brown believed that the 10,000-20,000 estimate should be accepted but consideration should be given to combining this estimate with estimates of the self-defense forces. A discussion followed, in which it was concluded that the assault youth were actually closer to village guerrillas than self-defense forces.

Mr. Walsh questioned the wisdom of lumping together different categories of enemy forces. He recommended that the subject be held in abeyance along with self-defense forces.

Friday

Minutes of OB Conference

Col. Graham, at the chairman's request, gave a short briefing on how MACV attrites its monthly OB. At the beginning of the month the enemy has a total force, for example, of 250,000 to 300,000 troops. This includes all kinds of enemy troops carried in MACV's OB including political infrastructure.

During the month there are inputs and outputs to this force.

Battle casualties are a minus

Non-battle casualties, are a minus -- estimates are made, and Chieu Hoi are known, are also a minus.

Infiltration is a plus -- This is based on historical trends and MACV's current assessment of the infiltration.

Recruitment is a plus -- Again an estimate, formerly 3,500 per month now up to 7,000 per year since the Tet Offense.

Casualties that can be attributed to main and local, administrative and political infrastructure are attrited specifically to these forces. Political infrastructure doesn't change much; hard also to attrite directly to administrative forces.

The remainder of the losses are attrited to the guerrilla forces. The rationale for this step is that the enemy upgrades his forces from this pool of troops. During periods of heavy casualties that can not be attrited directly to main and local forces the MACV methodology will deplete the guerrilla base.

However, every three months MACV takes an independent look at the strength of the guerrilla forces through the Ritz reporting system and adjusts the guerrilla figures accordingly.

There was a long period of questioning the MACV representatives about the attriting procedures and much uneasiness expressed, especially from the CIA representatives, about these procedures. The role of the guerrillas was especially questioned.

The Ritz reporting system was evaluated differently by different individuals. General Brown reported that he had lately been impressed by the system. Mr. Adams, pointed out a number of weaknesses of this system he had observed first hand. The CIA representatives requested we see more of the dis-aggregated Ritz reports. Mr. Walsh made a ~~plea~~ that we get more of this kind of information so that we can offer constructive criticism.

The new representatives in response to questions further explained details of the attrition process. All main and local forces are attrited as evidence permits; they are not brought back to strength automatically after a fixed interval of time. If a seriously attrited unit becomes aggressive again it is assumed that the unit is back to strength; if new infiltrating groups come in country and move close to a understrength unit it is assumed that the unit is again back to strength.

Infiltration is assumed to total 7,000 per month. If more come in during a given month, say the 19,000 earlier this year, the infiltration figure becomes 19,000 not 7,000. Questions were then raised as to whether infiltration wasn't still understated, however,

because no allowance was made for filler units that would not be picked up until much later.

In adjusting the OB retroactively when infiltration went above the assumed figure then the actual figure become the controlling input.

ATT pointed out that the MACV methodology made the guerrilla estimate of MACV's a very volatile estimate and it seemed to him that MACV should avoid giving monthly changes in the guerrilla figures.

There was next a general discussion of the problems the Washington community had because MACV's OB figures were published without a spread. MACV maintained that they did, in fact, give a spread to this estimate but that the single number tradition was necessary because of bookkeeping problems.

Mr. Walsh returned to the subject of attrition and the concern in Washington that total enemy losses were be charged to only a portion of the enemy's insurgency base when it was clear that numerous other categories outside MACV's order of battle were taking casualties.

Col. Graham was somewhat receptive to the notion of attriting from a larger base. Given losses of 10,000 in a month, perhaps 500 could be attrited from specific main and local and other units. A given percentage of the remainder could possibly be attrited to units outside the military OB. Col. Graham suggested that after a number of Ritz updates, it perhaps could be determined what percent of enemy losses were not absorbed by the guerrillas. Then this share of the total casualties would be assumed to have come from these other categories.

The chairman hoped that the conference could ultimately devise a format by which MACV's classical military OB could be kept discrete but be buttressed by a number of add-ons that would arrive at an estimate of total enemy strength -- as opposed to enemy OB. Hopefully, such a scheme would permit MACV to use their figures for military operations in Vietnam and also permit the Washington community to view the subject of enemy strength from a broader perspective.

Both the chairman and General Brown thought it would be a fruitful exercise if several persons were put to work on ways of attriting the OB, attriting the insurgency base. The chairman also stated his intention of naming a working group on Monday morning, hopefully to bring the various estimates of main and local forces closer together.

Friday afternoon session
12 April 1968

Minutes of OB Conference

Mr. Walsh called the meeting to order at 0900. The first order of business was the appointment of a working group to study the question of enemy main and local forces. The chairman appointed to this group,

AT [] CIA, chairman. Mr. Sam Adams, [] STAT

AT [] NSA and [] NSA. The working group was STAT
directed to report back to the conference Monday afternoon.

Mr. Walsh then returned to the final discussion of Friday afternoon and the possibility of the conference agreeing on a format in which both the direct military threat of the enemy could be presented and also the size of his insurgency base. This would be accomplished by adding additional categories, carefully defined, and add-ons, again carefully defined.

Col. Graham responded to Mr. Walsh's opening comments by stating that any new group that is taken from the total insurgency base and given a number assumes an unwarranted importance. The consumer gets the impression that one group is significant; another is not. He stated, a position stated previously on a number of occasions that, Saigon does not feel that meaningful numbers can be applied to many of these categories. He was opposed to selecting a few groups and labeling them the VC base.

Mr. Walsh responded that the insurgency base, as defined by CIA, did define an enemy capability. They were organized, performed specific functions, and play a direct role in the war. As in earlier discussions, he emphasized that the insurgency base was not the total manpower

controlled by the VC or to which they had access. Such a broad definition that included the total manpower base would serve no meaningful purpose.

General Brown commented that the various categories included in the concept of an insurgency base are of various degrees of value to the enemy. They are not as important as the forces in the military OB, but they are there and have to be treated. Textural descriptions should very carefully point out the role of such "forces". He could not get very excited about putting a number on them or not putting a number on them. But with numbers attached discussions of losses become more meaningful, and realistically speaking it was necessary to recognize that numbers had already been given them forces. The figures were in the public domain and will not go away. He personally would probably favor one number for the insurgency base, that was exclusive of the military OB. Later in the discussion General Brown returned to this subject and indicated he had reservations about fine breakdowns that had little to support them and asked why it wasn't adequate to describe these forces rather than count them.

The CIA position was again restated by [] and Allen. A broad concept of insurgency base resulted in 1.8 million people -- males and females of military age -- in South Vietnam. This was not a very useful concept because it did not supply a breakdown of what various groups did and how important they were.

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Col. Graham reiterated that he was opposed to the CIA insurgency base of one-half million because 1) he didn't believe it, 2) he didn't accept CIA's evidence. He was opposed to giving numbers when there was no basis for such a number. He maintained that there was much multiple counting in the CIA insurgency base figures.

There was then more discussion of the how different persons would use an insurgency base figure. Mr. [redacted], expressed concern that some people would multiple 500,000 times 5 or 10, to illustrate the large number of forces needed to overcome the insurgency. [redacted] out pointed that standard insurgency ratios as viewed from the US position were less important than the ratio the Communists need to achieve victory in Vietnam.

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Col. Graham, returning to another subject, criticized the general importance allotted to numbers. US should be interested in trends in enemy strength, and trends in the quality of enemy strength. Both were downward, and we should probably stop worrying about whether there are .25 or .50 million in the insurgency base.

[redacted] reported that CIA had no conflict with such a statement. Quality was important, trends were important; but quantitative estimates were important if for no other reason that they supply orders of magnitude.

Mr. Walsh responded to Col. Graham's remarks by emphasizing that CIA had addressed the qualitative problems in all of CIA's reports. He admitted that it would be nice not have to come up with certain numbers, but this was not the world we live in.

General Brown suggested that although it appeared that MACV was not going to be a party to CIA numbers it could help in defining the role of the various categories of the insurgency base.

He made a special plea for reaching agreement on an estimate of main and local forces. He felt a disagreement on this issue would go right up to the White House. He stated that the main and local forces estimate was the main issue.

Mr. Walsh returned to the subject of a new format for presenting estimates of enemy strength. He stated that [] had taken a first cut at putting together such a set of figures and this was ready for consideration. See Tab .

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General Brown commented on the need to separate soft numbers from hard numbers. He made some general comments on attaining agreement on the sizeable force of full-time guerrillas. He also commented that in the kind of war presently being fought, administrative services would have to be maintained at a high level.

[] distributed Tab X, and emphasized that it was important to consider the text that went along with the table. The text would flag, the concept and definitions behind the figures and how they should and should not be used.

There was some discussion of the cut off date of Tab X, [] stated the distributed table should have a cut off of 31 December.

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Mr. Walsh suggested that the conference first discuss the Political Infrastructure figures given in Tab X.

The discussion was similar to earlier discussion on Political Infrastructure. Lt. Robinson, stated that in MACV's view political infrastructures meant a leadership apparatus, support groups could be recruited as needed, it was misleading to say that typists or guards were a threat. If we deal with the "professional" these other types will go home.

Col. Robinson maintained that CIA's estimate of 20-30,000 in a political infrastructure support group was not a meaningful figure and not worth the trouble.

Mr. Walsh presented a counter argument by posing the question: Can the professional infrastructure be maintained without these supporting workers? He maintained it could not.

There was then a general discussion of the composition of the political infrastructure. A number of opinions were expressed that it appeared that the numbers in the two political categories of infrastructure -- professional, supporting, appeared inverted. The figure 20-30,000 seemed low as a supporting cadre base.

Col. Graham reiterated his position that if one wants to pick up supporting groups then there were all kinds of supporting groups that should be included.

As he saw the problem the government needed to know the important infrastructure that is in the country. CIA's new breakdown was a new way to get around the problem but all these questions had been fully discussed last year in writing 14.3. He could see no reason for any high authority being concerned with the number of clerks and guards. (F dec 61)
(F dec 61)

Mr. Walsh stated that he believed the evidence was overwhelming that the support personnel to the political infrastructure should be included. There was other comments by DIA officials stating that the existing definitions of infrastructure would require the inclusion of the support personnel.

The State representative agreed with the CIA position that there should be more than one category under political infrastructure. He did not, however, have any basis for accepting an estimate of 20,000-30,000.

Monday session
15 April 1968

Mr. Walsh proposed a working group be estimated that would include Sam Adams and Lt. Robinson to work at the political infrastructure OB and see if a common agreement could be reached.

Lt. Kelly thought that it would be impossible to come to an agreement without both Adams and himself returning to Saigon and going through the MACV files. He was certain they could come up with a number that counted the number of personnel excluded by MACV but included in Sam Adams report. This would not resolve the broader question, however, as whether these persons should be included in the political infrastructure.

Mr. Walsh emphasized that the proposed adjustment to the political infrastructure OB would have MACV's numbers and definitions intact.

DIA addressed the general problem of definition of the political infrastructure. Did it include officers and non-officers; professionals and non-professionals. There was no disagreement that definition was a complex problem. Mr. Adams in his briefing had spoke[✓] of the spectrum problem on several occasions.

Mr. Walsh concluded the morning session by emphasizing that CIA had presented a report indicating that the political infrastructure was in the order of 100,000 to 120,000. Did the conference agree that within this infrastructure there were 20,000 to 30,000 low level persons that still made a significant contribution to the total political apparatus. If so they should be included.

The meeting adjourned until 1300.

Monday morning session
15 April 1968

Monday afternoon

The conference reconvened on a discussion of the CIA estimates of administrative services contained in Tab , which had been distributed Monday morning.

Col. Thomann stated that numbers should be added for administrative forces out of the country. He indicated these would total 10,000-20,000 and include forces subordinate to the DMZ, B-3 front, and some in Laos.

Col. Graham indicated that Saigon had been questioned on this question and had replied that 5,500 additional personnel was outside South Vietnam and not carried in the MACV OB. These included forces in the DMZ and the B-3 front only, not Laos. He made the further observation that there was some administrative service units who were in the OB but actually outside the country.

The DIA delegation voiced the opinion that the MACV estimates seem low; DIA had 5,000 in the DMZ area alone; the magnitude of the effort would suggest more.

There then was a discussion of geographic limitations. DIA thought it was appropriate to go 25 miles north of the DMZ and the same distance into Laos and include all administrative forces within this area.

MACV wanted a range of 30,000 to 40,000 for administrative services. DIA wanted MACV's in country strength and an additional 10,000 to 20,000 for out of country strength, giving a total estimate of 47,700 to 57,000. CIA retained its estimate of 75,000 to 100,000 including out of country forces.

The chairman raised the issue that he had previously showed General Brown CIA's estimate of 75,000 to 100,000. General Brown had told the chairman that this seemed reasonable to him. The chairman asked the DIA delegation if this had been a commitment. [] stated if the General said that, he didn't mean it.

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There was then a period of considerable confusion in the DIA delegation as to what their position had been or presently was.

[] stated that anything we accept above the MACV figure is a great feeling. But [] admitted that she could ^{accept} first fly an additional 10,000 administrative service troops with country.

Mr. Walsh asked how DIA had arrived at a Thursday estimate of 60 to 70,000. DIA replied that this number had included additional troops in Laos Panhandle.

Later [] stated that there was logic to the DIA position. Looking at the combat strengths, there are places where administrative service troops are lacking. The enemy's administrative problems are such that they do need more people who must be working on a full-time basis. He stressed the need for more research. Until DIA had made a full study they could not go along with CIA even though admittedly the DIA research might result in even lighter figure.

In concluding comments MACV reiterated its stand that out of country administrative forces were in the order of 5,000 to 6,000 and stands on the agreed SNIE agreed figures. State indicated that it agrees with the CIA position. The service representatives took no position.

CINCPAC representative agreed with the MACV position, rejects CIA and DIA in country add-ons, and accepts a 5,500 add-on for out of country direct support.

The conference next took up the subject of guerrilla forces.

MACV gave the following estimates of enemy guerrilla strength. 71,700 on 31 December 1968; 70,300 corrected; and 75,500 in March, corrected; a range of 70,500 to 80,000.

DIA gave it's estimate as 70,000 to 80,000 as of 1 January 1968. These were full-time guerrillas. DIA could see no reason for not going along with MACV.

Col. Graham then answered a question as to what was in the MACV guerrilla estimate. Both village and hamlet guerrillas were included. Self-defense are not included, but all guerrillas are included. The Ritz programs makes no distribution between full-time and part-time guerrillas. There is also no breakdown between hamlet and village guerrillas.

The chairman asked if some programs wasn't being made by the CIA breakdown of guerrillas into two categories full-time and part-time.

thought it was hard to separate self-defense and hamlet guerrillas. Mr. Allen pointed out that these were separate categories.

Col. Graham commented that it was possible to count guerrillas but not break them down by type. He admitted that ^{Q172} R.142 reports may include some self-defense personnel. He thought that attempts to breakout enemy forces into separate categories was a pedantic exercise.

Mr. Allen countered by stressing that breakdowns of enemy strength were needed if his capabilities were to be fully understood. He believed it was vital.

The discussion then moved on to assault youth and self-defense. The chairman stated that on Friday he had thought CIA and DIA were in agreement. What had happened since? spoke of DIA preferring a category of self-defense/secret self-defense/assault youth.

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A discussion followed as to the appropriations of lumping together these forces. Mr. Adams pointed out that the self-defense forces were subordinate to the military affairs committees. The assault youth were subordinate to the forward supply councils. They were young, readily up-gradable, and 1 in 5 had a rifle or submachine gun. The assault youth were relatively few but a much more formidable group than the self-defense.

Col. Graham indicated that MACV felt these forces were adequately described in the previous estimate. They can not be quantified; there should be no attempt to quantify them.

The State representative believed the assault youth should be kept separate; their order of magnitude seemed OK. NSA indicated they would like a range for the self-defense forces. It was tentatively agreed that the CIA estimate would have a range of 80-120,000 instead of a flat 100,000.

AT gave the report of the working group on main and local forces. See Tab. There was a long and frequently confused discussion of adjusting the respective CIA and MACV's OB to 1 January 1968 data. Reconciling the SI data, and the reducing the CIA estimate of small units omitted from 10-11,000 to 5,000. All agreed that the CIA adjustment ^{July 7 1967} should be dropped based on MACV's statement as to how the unit strengths in the OB were carried. DIA was willing to go along with CIA that there should be an add-on of 5,000 for small units omitted. DIA did not concur with CIA that there should, however, be an additional add-on for support units integral to the division.

Col. Graham indicated that MACV was willing to add \pm 5,000 to the OB of 122,800 for the following reasons:

- 1) lag in picking up units in OB
- 2) lag in dropping units from OB
- 3) imprecision in estimating unit strength

The discussion made clear that MACV was willing to spread its main and local OB by \pm 5,000 as long as it not have to justify this spread with any of the specific CIA ^{objection} obligations to the MACV estimate. Col. Graham withdrew his offer of a spread.

Mr. Walsh made clear that CIA had been willing to cut back its estimate of small units from 10,000-11,000 to 5,000 to hopefully spur some conference agreement. Seeing that this was impossible CIA was keeping with its prior estimates of small unidentified units and unlisted support units.

Monday afternoon
15 April 1968

Tuesday

Minutes of OB Conference

The chairman convened the conference at 0900.

The chairman announced the way in which the conference report would be submitted to Mr. Helms. The CIA position on enemy strengths would be submitted as revised as a result of conference deliberations. He would also submit a report on the conference and give the positions of each of the principals. Attached to the report would be a series of methodological annexes. Written contributions from DIA and MACV, stating their positions, were invited.

The chairman next asked the working group on political infrastructure to report on the attempt to reach an agreed position on what should be included in this category.

Mr. Adams, chairman of the working group, repeated some of his earlier comments about the definitional problems. A ranking VC if asked for the size of the VC political infrastructure would not know what was even being asked.

The working group generally agreed that there were support elements to the political infrastructure at the district level and above that would make the total in excess of 84,000. The MACV position, however, was that a typist, clerk, or guard could be replaced tomorrow and therefore was not important enough to count. The CIA position remained that these support elements were important and should be counted.

The working group recommended, in an attempt to get some agreement, that 85,000 be carried as the size of the political infrastructure, but

a footnote be added indicating that there were additional support personnel at the district level and about which had not been quantified.

The chairman next asked the conference principals to comment on the recommendations of the working group.

MACV and CINCPAC representatives stated that they were keeping their range of 75-85,000 and saw no reason not to keep with 14.3.

DIA stated it preferred an estimate of 85,000, but this was later modified to a spread of from 80-90,000.

Mr. Walsh stated that in as much as the conference had not come any closer on the subject as a result of numerous discussions CIA was keeping with its earlier position.

80,000-90,000	professional cadre
10,000-30,000	support personnel
<hr/>	
90,000-120,000	Total political infrastructure

The chairman also noted that discussions of the conference made it clear that a number of participants were uneasy about the definitional problems behind the category. There had been fear expressed that we have in fact in measuring an inverted pyramid that did not give a true picture of enemy strength.

Col. Graham and all participants indicated that all were in favor of re-examination. There was less agreement about how re-examination was related to redefinition.

Tuesday session
16 April 1968